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UNCLAS KINGSTON 002306

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAR (BENT); USAID FOR DAN RILEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KSCA](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [JM](#) [WHO](#)

SUBJECT: JAMAICA - ADDRESSING THE THREAT OF AVIAN INFLUENZA

REF: A. KINGSTON 2148

[1](#)B. STATE 153802

[1](#)C. STATE 175585

[1](#)1. On September 27, Pol/Econ Chief, accompanied by USAID Missof, met with Health Ministry Permanent Secretary Grace Allen-Young and Dr. Lynette Peters, MOH Veterinary Services Director, to discuss the state of Jamaica's preparations to confront any outbreak of avian influenza on the island. P/E Chief began by relating recent Embassy outreach to the Foreign Affairs and Agriculture Ministries (Ref A), providing Young and Peters with a copy of Ref B and Ref C points for discussion.

[1](#)2. Allen-Young said that MOH had already begun internal review of a draft avian influenza action plan prepared by Peters and by Dr. Barrington Wint, MOH Chief Medical Officer, that included an inspection procedures for the tourism sector and poultry farmers. Allen Young said she expected that the plan would be finalized by the end of October, and that she would share it with the USG at that time. She said that the Asian SARS outbreak had galvanized the GOJ and the national health sector - particularly, she said, once the GOJ learned that more Chinese, and Chinese-Jamaicans, traveled between China and Jamaica than had previously been realized. MOH maintains a Public Health nurse at both Kingston's Norman Manley International Airport and at Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport, she said.

[1](#)3. Procedures and preparations begun at that time are being adapted to deal with avian influenza. Allen Young emphasized that MOH maintains good relations with the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC), and with the Caribbean Regional Epidemiological Center (CAREC), and indicated that they would continue to consult closely with CDC and CAREC regarding avian influenza. She noted that the types of medicines needed to treat avian influenza outbreak would likely be more readily available in the U.S. and in other developed countries, adding that that Jamaica and other CARICOM countries were concerned that in a health crisis, smaller countries could find their orders for medical supplies pre-empted by larger requests from elsewhere, with potentially lethal consequences in Jamaica or the Caribbean.

[1](#)4. Noting the prevalence of mixed farming in Jamaica, and the fact that many poorer Jamaicans live in close proximity to chickens, ducks, swine, and other animals, Dr. Peters said that the MOH is especially attuned to the risk of avian influenza. She said that the GOJ has established a Working Group consisting of representatives of MOH, Agriculture, and major poultry producers, to consider health-related avian issues.

[1](#)5. Allen Young identified Dr. Barrington Wint, Chief Medical Officer, MOH, is the GOJ's senior POC on avian influenza issues.

ROBINSON